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EXTENDING THE EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION BROADCASTS.

BY- JOHNSON, EUGENE I.
WORLD PEACE FOUNDATION, BOSTON, MASS.

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TWO APPROACHES TO EXTENDING THE EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE OF TELECASTS ARE DISCUSSED. THE FIRST APPROACH TAKES OFF FROM THE TELEVISION BROADCAST, THE EFFECT OF WHICH CAN BE HEIGHTENED BY DIAL ACCESS LIBRARIES OF MAGNETIC TAPE RECORDINGS, OPEN LINE PROGRAMS, DISCUSSION GROUPS, SIMULATION OR GAMES, AND THE PUBLICIZING OF OTHER RESOURCES, ALL OF WHICH HAVE BEEN USED SUCCESSFULLY, AND BY INTERACTION WITH THE BRAODCAST VIA SELECTION OF SUBPROGRAMS, WHICH IS TECHNICALLY POSSIBLE BUT HAS NOT YET BEEN USED. THE LEARNING SYSTEM APPROACH USES TELEVISION IN CONNECTION WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS OR EXPERIENCES TO ADD VARIETY, DEPTH, OR APPEAL TO THE WORLD AFFAIRS EDUCATION PROGRAMS. THE METROPLEX ASSEMBLY CAN CLOSE TO ILLUSTRATING THIS APPROACH IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION. IT WAS UNIQUE IN THAT THE PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE PROGRAM MET TO AGREE ON OBJECTIVES, UNDERLYING CONCEPTS, MAIN ISSUES TO BE RAISED, AND VALUE CONFLICTS IN THE COMMUNITY. (AUTHOR/LY)

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EXTENDING THE EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION BROADCASTS

by

Eugene I. Johnson*

Two approaches to extending the educational influence of television broadcasts, each approach capable of many variations, will be discussed briefly in this paper. The first approach takes off from the television broadcast and seeks ways and means to develop or extend its educational impact, but does not alter the broadcast itself. The second approach conceives of the television broadcast as one of a set of interrelated materials, each selected and developed to perform a unique, clearly defined role in a total educational task. This approach is sometimes called the systems approach. Each approach has its value as the examples given in the following pages seek to make clear.

In discussing these approaches, no distinction will be made between so-called "educational" television and commercial broadcasts. While there are certain important relations between the target audience and the organization of the content or program format, the purpose here is to discuss the usefulness of television in relation to other educational experiences. The only assumption made is that the program, regardless of whether it is carried on a commercial or other channel and regardless of the format, has been produced primarily for adults.

* Eugene I. Johnson is Executive Director of the Adult Education Association of the USA, headquartered in Washington, D.C.

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Five ways to heighten the educational impact of television will be cited for the first approach. All of them have been successfully used in one or more cities in the country.

A sixth method will also be identified - one that new technological developments make possible, but to my knowledge has not yet been employed.

1. Dial access library of magnetic tape recordings

The dial access library, widely used in medicine and a few other fields, permits an appropriate person to dial a telephone number and then select from a list of tape recordings one that he wishes to hear. The recording may be five minutes or a half hour in length. The call may be placed locally or via long distance; the only person to whom it matters is the one who pays the bill.

In the field of world affairs education, a dial access library would permit an individual to obtain quickly background information and expert analyses on a wide range of issues in foreign policy that are certain to dominate the news at sometime in the future. The people who might use such a library include newscasters, editorial writers, teachers, ministers, and others who seek to advise or help individuals understand an issue. However, the library could equally well serve a large number of concerned individuals seeking only to inform themselves.

Consider the possibilities. A Walter Lippmann, David Lawrence, Eric Sevareid, or any of a variety of scholars not normally heard on television might record five carefully developed minutes of analysis on a critical issue - the rearming of the Arab nations, for example. Following a news-

broadcast, the viewer could be invited to pick up his telephone and dial the library number. Furthermore, the broadast comment itself could be taped and made available in this way for anyone who missed the program. Frequent repetition of the telephone number would soon establish familiarity with it. If a longer and more intensive analysis were desired - one that would fill in the gaps left by the news summary - that, too, could easily be arranged. The existence of the dial access library could be made known through newspaper publicity,posters, and other means and given an existence related to but independent of the television broadcast itself.

Some scrambling device, similar to that contemplated for pay television, could be attached to the telephone or television if it seems desirable to limit access to the library or help underwrite its expenses.

2. Open line.

The open line program is now a familiar feature on radio in many cities in the United States. The Canadians have adapted this approach to television and have placed it on a nationwide basis. Each Sunday evening last year, CBS carried an open line program on a national network. Interested persons, wherever they were in Canada, could call in with questions or comments. The long-distance toll was paid by the Canadian Adult Education Association. Suppose in the field of world affairs, a regular one- or two-hour time slot is set aside each week on a national basis. The time could be used to discuss whatever urgent matter had arisen in the course of the week, and long-distance telephone

calls or comments on that topic paid for on an economically feasible basis. The open line technique could also be adapted to a city, a region, or the viewing radius of a single television station.

3. Discussion groups tied to television broadcasts.

Such arrangements have been successfully used in St. Louis, Missouri (through the Metroplex Assembly), in the Twin Cities of Minnesota (through the Twin Cities Town Hall), in Salt Lake City, Utah, and, of course, in Boston, San Francisco, and other cities that have developed television programs in relation to Great Decisions programs. However, many of the television broadcasts keyed to Great Decisions programs have failed to realize the critical importance of defining the role of each media in a multi-media approach. Hence, the audiences, according to some researchers, for the television programs, have consisted of different people from the participants in the discussion groups. More about this later in the discussion of the systems approach.

CBS, in cooperation with the National Council of Churches, other national organizations, and many local groups, is currently seeking to stimulate via television widespread discussion of the critical choices modern man must make. The television broadcasts are supplemented by discussion focusers and background reading materials. Many individuals and groups seek to organize viewing groups and to feedback their comments and suggestions to the Natiinal Council offices in New York.

4. Simulation or games.

The growing populatity of simulation has an existence quite independent, obviously, of television. Bringing the game into the television studio, however, creates many possibilities for motivating casual viewers to a deeper interest in world affairs and involving them in the more serious study of an issue. It all depends, of course, on how the game is played. The Foreign Policy Association commissioned the development of a fairly elaborate game requiring six teams of four or five players each. Each of the teams represents a different country, one of them the host country in which the other five are busily at work planning and carrying out various moves in the intricate game of diplomacy. In the first broadcasting of the game (over WGBH in Boston), only one team - that representing the host country - was actually projected over the air waves. Viewers were asked to identify with this team and to call in any suggestions they might have for that team.

A simpler game might use the approach of the National Driver's Test. In such a game viewers might be given questiins each with multiple-choice answers. The answers of a studio group could be announced so that each viewer could compare his results with those of other persons. Games could be constructed, for example, around facts about foreign countries or processes of acting on various issues (how the United States makes a treaty, declares war, etc.) Games provide an opportunity to correct misconceptions that many Americans hold about foreign aid. As Mr. Hero states in a paper prepared for this meáting, many Americans, according to a public opinion poll, do not realize that other nations also carry on foreign aid programs and that some of them place a relatively greater burden on their people than does the United States. On with the game!

5. Publicizing other resources in the television program.

The television program may suggest books available from the library or bookstores; this approach is the basis on which many library television programs have been built. It can publicize community resources that many people may not be aware of, such as special exhibits, classes at the local university, programs of the World Affairs Council, etc. To make this approach effective, the station - or some group with a major interest in world affairs education - would need to catalog such resources carefully so that they would be available and easily fed into special programs or news broadcasts which are developed quickly when significant happenings occur anywhere throughout the world.

6. Interaction with the broadcast via selection of subprograms.

In a paper commissioned by the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, Professor J.C.R. Licklider discusses the importance of interaction between the program and viewer as a means of generating motivation in casual viewers. The television band, like the FM radio band, may be divided into subbands, each carrying separate programs, all received concurrently on the viewer's set. An adapter would enable the individual to select the subprogram he wished to watch. In world affairs education, a brief summary of several important developments in world affairs could be followed by subprograms, each concurrently presenting a more comprehensive account or analysis of the event or issue. All viewers would watch the same program for perhaps ten minutes and then press a button to watch the subprogram in which each is most interested.

Technological interaction could also take the form of pressing a button to record an opinion on an issue under discussion, thus enabling the person in the studio to alter his program in response to the cues from his invisible audience.

Interaction is, of course, not dependent on these technological developments which are still in an early stage. However, fairly elaborate screening mechanisms are necessary to enable reasonably large numbers of people to interact with a program that is designed for a mass audience. Such mechanisms are quite practical, as that established for the Metroplex Assembly in St. Louis proved, but to date few stations or educational agencies have been willing or able to develop them.

The Learning System Approach

Thus far we have suggested six ways to stretch the educational impact of television broadcasts. Let us turn now to television as it might be used in connection with other educational materials or experiences to add variety, depth, or appeal to the world affairs education programs. A brief explanation of the writer's bias or perspective is in order at this point.

Looking back in time, one sees that the uses of various media or resources in fairly large-scale informal adult education parallel, in some ways, the experience of the formal educational establishments. Each medium or educational resource - films, film strips, radio, magnetic tape, television - was regarded as an independent nucleus for the organization of a learning experience. Gradually, however, the focus

began to shift from the material or medium to the learner. As this happened, the educational advantages of the different media that had been the subject of discrete educational experiences were brought together in an integrated approach to the learner. This is usually dubbed the "systems approach." Computer-directed instruction is an illustration of a learning system. However, not technology but the integration of educational materials, each with a carefully defined role, is the core of the systems approach.

A learning system, employing television as one of its ingredients, may be valid for one person or for many thousands if it is carefully developed. The organizer of an informal education program about world affairs does not usually have the control over the materials he uses that the classroom teacher has. Furthermore, the ingredients of a comprehensive, multi-media educational program for adults are usually controlled by separate agencies - the library, school, newspaper, etc. The task of relating these different media in a learning system is a formidable one as most community education organizers have learned. Most programs that appear to achieve this integration are actually assemblings of independently operated programs revolving around a central theme and carried on in loose coordination within a given time span. They are valuable indeed and the whole is somewhat greater than the sum of its parts. But they are a far cry from a learning system in operation in the community.

The writer once directed a program in St. Louis, Missouri, known as the Metroplex Assembly that came close to illustrating the learning system approach in community education. In this program, a series of

television broadcasts were projected primarily to organized viewing groups that met to watch the first half of the program (usually a half-hour documentary on a subject of great importance to the metropolitan area), who then discussed for an hour the issues raised, and finally telephoned in to the studio questions that grew out of their discussions. These questions and the discussion in the television studio formed the substance of the second half of the program. The groups were given training in discussion, supplied background reading materials, discussion guides, and opinion ballots to provide an additional feedback mechanism.

All of these separate ingredients have been widely used in many other cities and in various combinations. However, the feature that made the Metroplex Assembly operation unique was the fact that the persons responsible for developing the different parts of the total program met together to agree on program objectives, underlying concepts, main issues to be raised, and value conflicts in existence in the community. Each feature of the total program was so carefully related to each other part that no one part duplicated the function of another, yet all were in harmony insofar as the objectives of the program were concerned. I do not know of any other television program whose producer has gone through this kind of combined operation before turning to his unique responsibilities.

It is difficult to apply the learning system approach to the informal education of large numbers of adults about world affairs; yet, until we learn to do so, this writer remains convinced that we shall

not make that massive impact which is essential to any real shift in public attitudes or thinking.[4] Only when the whole of a community - indeed, the whole of an organized society - is seen as the client and informal educational programs for adults respond to that concept will education begin to make its full contribution to the shaping of an informed and rational public opinion. Only then will television realize its full educational potential.[5]

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